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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2012

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SUBJECT: KARZAI REACHES OUT TO HIG SPLINTER GROUP

Classified By: Classified by Acting DCM Bruce Rogers for reasons 1.4 (B)
) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: President Karzai recently appointed Hezbi-Islami-Afghanistan (HIA) Chairman Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal to the post of presidential tribal affairs advisor. The Pashtun Arghandiwal is a former close associate of blacklisted Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Karzai continues to reach out to dissident Pashtuns, hoping to broaden support for his leadership among Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. Karzai's Pashtun coalition-building may alienate other ethnic groups. End Summary.

12. (SBU) During a recent conversation, Hezbi-Islami-Afghanistan party chairman Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal told us he had been appointed by Karzai as his tribal affairs advisor. Arghandiwal said he will use his new office to improve relations between the Palace and Afghanistan's Pashtun tribes. He envisions as the vehicle for those improved relations a kind of standing jirga that would host tribal representatives from across the country's southern and eastern Pashtun belt.

13. (C) By drawing Arghandiwal and the HIA into his administration, Karzai brings himself to within one remove of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the blacklisted leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG). Arghandiwal was a close associate of Hekmatyar's during the anti-Soviet Jihad and the chaotic mujahideen aftermath. The two reportedly became estranged sometime during 1996 when Arghandiwal threw in his lot with the then ascendant Taliban. Though HIG is now allied with the Taliban, Arghandiwal denies having any continuing contact with Hekmatyar. Nevertheless, he favors negotiations between HIG and the Afghan government. Arghandiwal claims Hekmatyar is "ready to negotiate," but is prevented from doing so by his blacklisting. Arghandiwal also advocates negotiations between the government and the Taliban.

14. (SBU) In a separate conversation, HIA representatives told us their party has offices in Herat, Nangarhar and Nimroz. It also circuit-rides through Badghis, Ghor, Khost and Laghman. The party plans to open offices in Helmand, Kandahar and Kunduz. Though active in predominantly Pashtun areas, Arghandiwal says his party's membership is open to all

Afghans regardless of ethnicity.

15. (C) Comment: Hoping to broaden support for his leadership among Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, Karzai continues to court aggressively Pashtuns from a range of tribes and political affiliations. By bringing Arghandiwal into his administration, the president risks arousing the ire of non-Pashtun Afghans already suspicious of his Pashtun coalition-building. Non-Pashtun Afghans contend Arghandiwal is merely a surrogate for Hekmatyar, who brutally assaulted Kabul's civilian population during the mid-90s and is believed to have facilitated the November 6 Baghlan bombing, which killed six MPs and scores of schoolchildren.

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